

SIGMUND FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF ID, EGO AND SUPEREGO: A CRITICAL STUDY OF DIRECTOR SHANKAR'S MOVIE, ANNIYAN

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ABSTRACT

Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theory are among the most often discussed critical and contentious issues of modern psychology, film and literature. Freud has brought lot of controversies in the field of modern film and literature through his theory of psychoanalysis. On the contrary a few other critics' notion indicates a great deal of appreciation. In this context, this paper aims to critically analyze the facts lying with the characterization of the movie; *Anniyan* directed by Shankar, one of India's leading directors in the contemporary tamilfilm industry. Director Shankar, is known for movies with strong social themes and commercial narration. This paper aims at critically analyzing the characters of Ramanujam, Anniyan and Remo in the perspective of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory.

KEYWORDS: Sigmund Freud, Anniyan, Psychoanalytic Theory

INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud divided mental life into three agencies or "provinces," id, ego, superego. The id is the oldest and most primitive psychic agency, representing the biological foundations of personality. It is the reservoir of basic instinctual drives, particularly sexual (libidinal) drives, which motivate the organism to seek pleasure. The ego is a modification of the id that emerges as a result of the direct influence of the external world. It is the "executive" of the personality in the sense that it regulates libidinal drive energies so that satisfaction accords with the demands of reality. It is the center of reason, reality-testing, and commonsense, and has at its command a range of defensive stratagems that can deflect, repress, or transform the expression of unrealistic or forbidden drive energies. The superego is a further differentiation within the ego which represents its "ideal." The superego emerges as a consequence of the Oedipal drama, whereby the child takes on the authority and magnificence of parental figures through introjections or identification. Whereas the id operates in pursuit of pleasure, and whereas the ego is governed by the reality principle, the superego bids the psychic apparatus to pursue idealistic goals and perfection. It is the source of moral censorship and of conscience.

Indian Film Director Shankar's, ever loving passion for creating characters that have dual roles to play is yet again manifested in this movie, *Anniyan*. The tamil movie *Anniyan* is the story of a young lawyer, Ramanujam (Ambi), who is a meek and devout Iyengar by the day and an undertaker by night who goes against the bad elements of the society with his gruesome murders. His regular habit to be perfect in rules and honesty leads him to develop a Multiple Personality Disorder in which two new personalities in him grows as "Anniyan", a grim reaper-themed killer and "Remo", a suave fashion model. Anniyan is violent and deranged, and kills lawbreakers by methods used for torturing people in hell, as mentioned in the *Garuda Purana*. He then indicates the Sanskrit name for the punishment used at the place where he kills

them. Meanwhile, Ambi has no clue that such a monster exists within him.

Later, Ambi is in love with his neighbour Nandhini, a medical student, who also teaches music. Ambi proposes to her, but she rejects him due to his staunch following of rules. Distraught, Ambi attempts suicide, but is saved when the third personality, "Remo" comes to life within him. This persona, woos Nandhini, who instantly falls for him.

Later, Nandhini acquires land in Tambaram, but buys it at less than the proposed amount to avoid paying tax to the government. Ambi is saddened by Nandini's act, triggering Anniyan. Anniyan chases Nandini and tries to kill her, but then reverts to Ambi, who does not know where he is and what he is doing and falls unconscious. A terrified Nandini then takes Ambi to a psychiatric care, where he is diagnosed with multiple personality disorder. At the psychiatric care, Ambi reveals to the psychiatrist, his dark past. When he was 10 years old, he witnessed the tragic death of his 8-year old sister Vidya, which affected his psyche, very deeply. Hence, the psychiatrist concludes that the death of Vidya resulted in the development of this psychological disorder. He also triggers Anniyan and Remo and finds out that while Anniyan and Remo are fully aware that they are Ambi, Ambi has no clue about his multiple personalities. The psychiatrist then comes to the conclusion that while Remo can disappear if Nandhini accepts Ambi's love, Anniyan can only disappear if India is free from all its ills. Nandhini eventually accepts Ambi's love and Remo disappears. Later, Anniyan reveals himself at a gathering at Nehru Stadium. He addresses the problems faced by India and the punishments he has used to tackle them. He wins the outright support of the people due to his ideals and methods. The police turn up and reveal that Ambi is suffering from a psychological disorder and is sentenced to two years of psychological treatment in a lunatic asylum.

Two years later, Ambi is released and he marries Nandhini. By now, his puritan adherence to protocol has diminished. While travelling on a train, Ambi notices a man (the person who was responsible for ambi's sisters death) drinking in front of women. He suffers a relapse on seeing this, transforms into Anniyan and kills the man by throwing him off the train. However, he hides the crime from Nandhini, proving that instead of eradicating Anniyan, he has become successful in blending the personalities of Ambi, Anniyan and Remo into one. The movie thus comes to an end with a strong message for the audience that, "You reap, what you sow".

Freud in Context

In this context, it is important to understand the psychoanalytic theory of Id, Ego and Superego by Freud. Freud regarded Id, Ego and Superego to represent the dynamic relations between the *conscious* and the *unconscious* –



Figure 1a: Freud's Conception of the Human Psyche <http://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html>

The Id: Latin for the term “it,” this division of the mind includes our basic instincts, inborn dispositions, and animalistic urges. Freud said that the id is totally unconscious, that we are unaware of its workings. The id is not rational; it imagines, dreams, and invents things to get us what we want. The “id” (fully unconscious) said to contain the drives and those things repressed by consciousness;

The Ego: Greek and Latin for “I,” this personality structure begins developing in childhood and can be interpreted as the “self.” The ego is partly conscious and partly unconscious. The ego operates according to the reality principle; that is, it attempts to help the id get what it wants by judging the difference between real and imaginary. If a person is hungry, the id might begin to imagine food and even dream about food. (The id is not rational.) The ego, however, will try to determine how to get some real food. The ego helps a person satisfy needs through reality. The “ego” (mostly conscious) said to deal with external reality;

The Super Ego: This term means “above the ego,” and includes the moral ideas that a person learns within the family and society. The superego gives people feelings of pride. The term superego means “above the ego,” and includes the moral ideas that a person learns within the family and society. The “super ego” (partly conscious) said to be the conscience or the internal moral judge.

To make easier, generally, id is seen as the biological component of personality; ego is seen as psychological component; and superego is seen as social component (Hall & Lindzey, 1993:68).

The above said conception of psychoanalysis of personality may well be matched with the three personalities of Ramanujam the movie, *Anniyan*. Let us first analyze the character of Ramanujam (Ambi) in the movie. As the movie starts, the protagonist Ramanujam, identifies himself in the state of “super ego” wherein he is portrayed as a man of principles and moral values. This state of his mind is considered to be the real nature of the individual. As Freud clearly states that the superego is an agency that seeks to enforce the striving for perfection, as it holds out to the ego ideal standards and moralistic goals. As a consequence the superego is the “conscience” of the personality, and it can retaliate against the imperfections of the ego by inducing guilt. This typical characteristic trait of “super ego” is justified many times in the movie through Ramanujam. For example, he shouts at people to follow traffic rules on the road, when his vehicle brake malfunctions, he goes and fights for justice with the shop keeper who sold the brake.

As Freud emphasizes that the childhood experience of an individual will have a great impact in the adolescent stage, Ramanujam is greatly affected by the death of his sister Vidhya during his childhood and that forms the reason for his urge to take revenge on people who are corrupt and undutiful. As the story unfolds, Ramanujam seems to suffer from Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), a psychic disorder characterized by having at least one “alter” personality that controls behavior. The “alters” alters are said to occur spontaneously and involuntarily, and function more or less independently of each other.



Figure 1b: Ramanujam (Ambi) in *Anniyan*

Later as the plot develops, the character of Anniyan is revealed to the audience. Whenever there occurs an injustice to people in the society, Anniyan comes to rescue and ensures proper justice is given to the innocent. Anniyan, an expression of the state of “Id” is crude in nature. He purely acts on the principle of pleasure-pain. Anniyan, takes on the state of id to satisfy his thirst for revenge and justice by murdering people. It is also interesting to see him employ different way to fulfill his act of pleasure-pain principle. As mentioned in the *Garuda purana*, Anniyan derives secret pleasure in punishing the victims of the corrupted society.

Some of these punishments are:

- **Anthakupam-** This is hell for those who oppress the good people and not helping them if requested despite having the resources. They will be pushed into a well, where beasts like Lions, tigers, eagles and venomous creatures like snakes and scorpions. The sinners have to endure the constant attacks of this creature until the expiry of the period of their punishment.
- **Kumbhipakam-** This is the hell for those who kill animals for pleasure. Here oil is kept boiled in huge vessels and sinners are pushed into these vessels.
- **Krimiibhojanam-** Those who do not honour their Guests and make use of men or women only for their own gain, are thrown into this hell. Worms, insects and serpents eat them alive.



Figure 1c: Personality of Anniyan in the Movie *Anniyan* Representing ‘Id’

The last personality is “Remo” a care free fashion model, who identifies himself in the state of “ego”. The ego serves two masters – id and reality- and it is constantly mediating striking compromises between their often conflicting

demands. It is called as reality principle. It should be clear that the ego is besieged from two directions. It must cope with the libidinal and aggressive drives of the id, from "below," and also the harsh moralistic and perfectionist demands of the superego, from "above." The ego must further reconcile these contrary tendencies with the demands of external reality. Remo, a worldly wise persona, is indeed a façade of the repressed love of Ramanujam, for Nandhini. In reality, it was difficult for Ramanujam to win the heart of Nandhini and so he put on a 'worldly' attire to please her.



Figure 1d: Remo an Expression of Ego –Anniyan

Analysis of the movie

The duration of the movie is for about 3 hours. For understanding the analysis, the entire time frame of the movie is converted to minutes. The transition from one character to another character happens in a sequence where even a second to second change has been recorded in the line chart given below. X axis refers to the number of seconds a character appears on the screen and Y axis refers to the total time frame of the movie. The entry time of each character differs from one another. The first character to get introduced on screen is the character of Ramanujam, during 1:11s. The first appearance lasts for about 25:39 s. After which the character of Anniyan is introduced at 32.58 s. The last character Remo enters in 66.35 s. Though Remo's appearance is for a short duration, all the three characters have a steady start as the events manifold.

The frequency chart is a visual representation of the appearance of characters on the screen throughout the movie. The appearance of Anniyan, Remo and Ramanujam are manifestations of Id, Ego and Super Ego respectively. The transition from one state to the other has been clearly looked at. It has been observed that the Id and Super Ego values coincide at values 170.10s – 170.13s, where the transition is sudden and quick. The loss of identity of the characters seems to take place within duration of one second. Both these curves start from almost the same time and ends in the same place, too. The time travel of these curves appears to be synonymous.

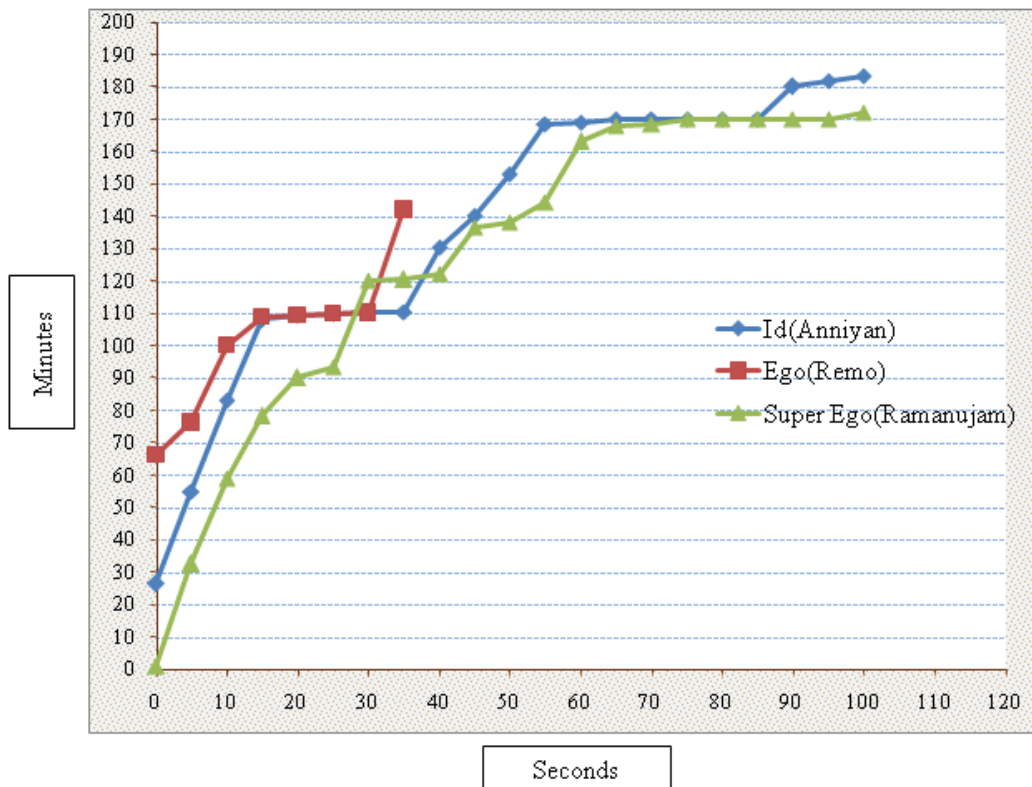


Figure 1e: Frequency Chart of the Appearance of Characters on Screen

With reference to the frequency chart cited above a tabular column indicating the true values of the duration of transition of each of the characters is given below. The values highlighted in red have recorded the transition as rapid. The overall duration of the appearance of characters is 166 Minutes and 58 Seconds, i.e., 2:46:58. For a period of 15.69, is dedicated to a certain flashback and other events in the movie. It can also be observed that on certain occasions, the performances of Id, Ego and Super Ego have faced tremendous ups and downs. Nevertheless, the movie has continued to entertain the audience from the start till the end.

Table 1: Tabular Column Representing the Time and Duration of Appearance of Characters

Sl. No.	Ramanujam (Super Ego)	Duration	Anniyan (Id)	Duration	Remo	Duration
1	1.11	25.39	26.51	3.52	66.35	8.97
2	32.58	21.63	55.10	2.43	76.36	2.04
3	59.11	3.39	83.13	6.91	100.13	7.98
4	78.41	4.69	108.26	0.84	109.12	0.18
5	90.18	0.39	109.36	0.17	109.55	0.52
6	93.37	6.75	110.06	0.06	110.28	0.13
7	120.10	0.39	110.22	0.05	132.40	1.16
8	120.50	2.07	110.42	9.67	142.14	2.34
9	122.46	8.08	130.55	1.84		
10	136.56	0.03	140.39	1.2		
11	138.20	2.18	153.27	7.3		
12	144.50	6.9	168.52	0.67		
13	163.13	4.89	169.28	0.08		
14	168.04	0.47	170.08	0.01		
15	168.52	0.67	170.11	0.01		
16	170.10	0.01	170.13	0.02		

17	170.12	0.01	170.17	0.01	
18	170.15	0.01	170.21	2.03	
19	170.17	0.01	180.20	1.89	
20	170.19	0.01	182.10	1.29	
21	172.26	6.74	183.40	--	
Total		94.71		48.55	23.32

CONCLUSIONS

The movie “*Anniyan*”, conceptualizes Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis. A healthy personality development requires a balance between the id and the superego. These two divisions of the mind are naturally at conflict with one another: The id attempts to satisfy animal, biological urges, while the superego preaches patience and restraint. The struggle between these two is an example of intra psychic conflict—conflict within the mind. According to psychoanalytic theory, defense mechanisms are automatic (unconscious) reactions to the fear that the id’s desires will overwhelm the ego. Freud believed that a healthy personality was one in which the id’s demands are met but also the superego is satisfied in making the person feel proud and not overwhelmed by guilt. If the id is too strong, a person will be rude, over bearing, selfish, and animalistic. If the superego is too strong, a person is constantly worried, nervous, and full of guilt and anxiety and is always repressing the id’s desires.

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